

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 are pending. In the Office Action mailed on July 26, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 1-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,006,215 to Retallick ("Retallick"). Further examination and review in view of the remarks below are respectfully requested.

Applicants' techniques are directed to providing collaboration among workers. In some cases, the collaboration occurs through the sharing of smaller tasks among the workers, also referred to as resources, involved in a larger project. Responsibility for tasks, also referred as task ownership, can be delegated from a project manager to the resources working on the project. Moreover, any resource may delegate a task to any other resource. As a project progresses, tasks can be transferred from one manager to another manager and/or resource, with the transferring manager retaining varying levels of control over the delegation process, for example, from a strictly controlled approach to a flexible, highly collaborative approach. In operation, when a resource (delegator) delegates a task to another resource (delegatee), the delegator's client sends a delegation message to a server. In response to receiving the delegation message, the server forwards the new task ownership information to a database and also communicates the delegation information to the delegatee's client and the project manager client.

All of the claims stand rejected over Retallick. Retallick merely describes using a database to create, store and retrieve linked records to facilitate contact and activity management. (col. 1, line 66-col. 2, line 4). According to Retallick, users utilize screens to enter data into named fields to create Activity, Contact and Topic records, which are stored in the database for later retrieval. (described at col. 2, line 41-col. 3, line 16, and shown in Figs. 5-10). The records in the database: are to be recalled and reviewed by the users (col. 3, lines 26-28); can be retrieved for review by the users (col. 4, line 60); are retrievable by a user (col. 6, lines 29-30); and can be recalled and displayed by users (col. 7, line 35). In Retallick, when a task is delegated to a user, an Activity record is created

and added to the user's ToDo List, allowing the user to view the list of the activities. (col. 4, lines 53-59; col. 6, lines 61-64). Thus, according to Retallick, the delegation is recorded by the creation and the addition of the Activity record to the user's ToDo List, and the user becomes aware of the delegation when the user calls up his/her ToDo List and displays the Activities in the list. (col. 9, lines 14-30).

All of the claims each recite sending task delegation information from the server to a resource client and to a project manager client, wherein the delegation information is distinct from the record of the task delegation sent from the server to the storage medium, or similar language. In rejecting the claims, the Examiner indicated that Retallick's means for exchanging a commitment dialog (col. 6, line 61-col. 7, line 10 and 23-28) corresponds to Applicants' task delegation information that is distinct from the record of the task delegation sent from the server to the storage medium. In particular, the Examiner stated:

After carefully re-considering the prior art of record, the examiner found that Retallick's system requires pre-acceptance from a target recipient when delegating a task. In the process, the server (i.e., the delegation module) provides a means of exchanging commitment dialog [see col. 6, line 61-col. 7, line 1-10 and 23-28]. Thus, it is clear that the dialog between the sender and recipient is different from the data being sent to the database.

Applicants respectfully disagree. According to Retallick, the embodiment of the invention that includes a Task Delegation Module is capable of assessing a User's daily workload and providing assistance in the management of that workload, and providing a means of exchanging commitment dialog so that all Users can act in a common environment of committed actions. (col. 7, lines 23-28). The only possible disclosure of a commitment dialog in Retallick is made at col. 6, line 61 to col. 7, line 22, which states:

The present invention can include a module for task delegation (Task Delegation module) (sending an Activity to a Recipient) that permits the Sender-Recipient link to be bidirectional. That is, when an Activity is created that establishes an Action (or other Activity Type) that requires some task to be performed or response to be made by a Recipient, that task or response is not added to that Recipient's ToDo List without limitation, restriction or pre-acceptance. Instead of the Recipient having to manually reject a task by creating another Activity to

either send the task back to the Sender or to another Recipient (which the Recipient always has the option to do), the Sender will be alerted that the Recipient is unavailable (such as on vacation, or on a business trip, or not accepting new tasks, etc.). When that occurs, the Sender will have to modify the Activity in order to have it entered (a non-rejecting Recipient is a prerequisite to entering an Activity). The Task Delegation module creates a high level of sophistication by providing means by which the status of every User's workload is recorded as a Daily Activity Profile and available to be taken into account in allocating tasks. Once a database of daily Activity Profiles is created, the invention is able to monitor each User's daily workload for available time. Using this information, the invention will permit, permit with warning, reject with warning or reject outright, an Activity sent by a User (Sender) to Recipients, depending on limits established relative to the Daily Activity Profiles. Each User is able to adjust his/her Daily Activity Profile as a way of regulating his/her workload.

According to Retallick, the commitment dialog is between the Task Delegation Module and the user's Daily Activity Profile. In particular, the Task Delegation Module takes into account the user's workload as recorded in the user's Daily Activity Profile in allocating tasks to the user. Using the information in the user's Daily Activity Profile, the Task Delegation Module permits, permits with warning, rejects with warning, or outright rejects, an Activity sent by a Sender to Recipients. Subsequent to checking the Recipient's Daily Activity Profile (i.e., performing the commitment dialog), the Task Delegation Module delegates an Activity by adding it to the Recipient's ToDo List.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner asserted that "it is clear that the dialog between the sender and the recipient is different than the data being sent to the database." Applicants respectfully disagree. First, as explained above, the commitment dialog, which arguably may be different than the record of the task delegation sent from the server to the storage medium, is between the Task Delegation Module and the appropriate Daily Activity Profile (i.e., the Task Delegation Module checking the Daily Activity Profile). Second, Retallick teaches that the Recipient can manually reject a task by creating another Activity to either send the task back to the Sender or to another Recipient. (col. 7, lines 2-5.) As explained above, an Activity is sent to a Recipient by adding it to the Recipient's ToDo List, and the Recipient calls up his/her ToDo list to display the Activities scheduled for him/her for that day. (col. 9, lines 26-29.) When an

Activity record is created, the activity is automatically added to the Recipient's ToDo List. (col. 4, lines 53-55.) In Retallick, the communication of the assignment of an Activity is (1) from the server (i.e., the Task Delegation Module) to the storage media and (2) from the storage media to the client, in that the Task Delegation Module creates an Activity record in the storage media, which automatically causes the Activity to be included in the Recipient's ToDo List, again in the storage media, for subsequent retrieval and viewing by the Recipient. Therefore, in contrast to the Examiner's assertion, in Retallick, there is no direct communication of the assignment between the server (i.e., the Task Delegation Module) and the client (i.e., Recipient of the assigned Activity). At best, any indirect communication of the assigned Activity from the server to the client in Retallick is via the Activity record that is created in the storage media. This is in contrast to Applicants' server that sends the task delegation information to a delegated client and a project manager, where the task delegation information is distinct from the record of the task delegation sent to the storage medium. Applicants can find in Retallick no such disclosure or suggestion.

Conclusion

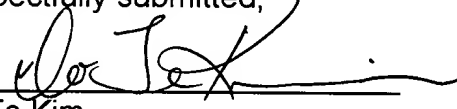
In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-18 are allowable and ask that this application be passed to allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-8000.

Dated:

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Respectfully submitted,

By


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